N° XIII.

THE THEATRICAL CENSOR.

BY A CITIZEN.

If you think I come hither as a *lion*, it were pity of my life:—No, I am no such thing; I am a man, as other men are.

SHAKESPEAR—*Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Ne vous enivrez point des éloges flatteurs
Qu'un amas quelquefois de vains admirateurs
Vous donne en ces réduits, prompts à crier, Merveille!

BOILEAU.

Ask you what provocation I have had?
The strong antipathy of good to bad!

POPE.

PHILADELPHIA, FEBRUARY 22.

THE most unequivocal proofs are now given of the utility of a Theatrical Censor; and that we have faithfully performed our duty the breath of patronage sufficiently evinces. We have galled the undeserving performer; we have praised wherever we could discover genius and merit; and we have scourged the meddling scribblers who have become the tools of the wayward and rebellious children of Thespis. Vainly do these gentlemen imagine that personalities shall shield them from the assaults of ridicule. The Theatrical Censor is invulnerable; and, whilst his barbed shaft is rankling in the breasts of his adversaries, he regards them with pity, and wishes them a safe recovery. The confined limits of our paper prevent elaborate discussions of many subjects which might interest our friends, and astonish our malignant foes. Next Season, the Theatrical Censor will be renewed on a dif-

ferent plan, embracing every kind of Dramatic intelligence that may be useful to the lovers of the art. Meanwhile, we will pursue our wonted course of Truth and Justice; and, whether our friends of the stage leap through hogsheads of fire, or swallow a bushel of whole carrots, for their benefits, we wish them all the success they deserve, but shall not fail to exercise the duties of our occupation: " S'ils veulent avoir en nous des admirateurs, il faut qu'ils nous permettent d'oser être leurs juges."

Monk Lewis's *Castle Spectre*, on Monday Evening, attracted a numerous audience. The rage for ghosts has not ceased; and, in this play, although the author has contrived to keep awake the attention by armouries, secret doors, ghosts, dungeons, fat friars, and starvation, we see little to justify his motto:

> Io me n' andro colla barchetta mia,
> Quanta l'acqua-comporta un picciol legno;
> E ciò, ch' io penso colla fantasia,
> Di piacere ad oguno è il mio disegno:
> Ben so, che spesso, come gia Morgante,
> Lasciato ho forse troppo andar la mazza;
> Ma dove sia poi judice bastante.
> Materia c' è da camera e da piazza.
>
> Pulci.

That there is matter for the closet and for the stage, da camera e da piazza, we are, however, ready to acknowledge; but it is such matter as we would willingly see driven from our shelves, and from the theatre.

In the representation of this evening, Mr. Fennell pleased us extremely. His first soliloquy was admirably delivered; and, upon the entrance of *Angela*, the transition from the strongest emotions of horror to the soft eloquence of love was managed with much judgment and effect. But, Mr. Fennell was not so happy in the second scene of the fourth act, where he should appear at the door of the chamber, unobserved by *Kenrick* and *Angela*, and listen to their conver-

sation. The audience saw nothing of Mr. F. till he exclaims, "Miscreant! within there!" The effect of *Kenrick's* conversation, therefore, which proves that "listeners seldom hear any good of themselves," was entirely lost upon the audience. In the same act, it appeared to us rather singular that *Osmond* should start from his bed, after awaking from a frightful dream, and appear in full dress. Perhaps, Mr. Fennell conceived it indecent to wear a night-gown.

Mr. Warren was fat and merry enough for any friar in Christendom.

Mr. Cain exhibited neither the determined bravery of the *Earl of Northumberland*, nor the winning graces of the favored lover of *Angela*.

Motley, by no means one of Mr. Jefferson's worst performances, might have received a richer colouring.

Mrs. Wignell, in *Angela*, was perfect in every sense of the word.

Alice was well performed by Mrs. Francis.

Evelina had too much action for a ghost.

Upon the whole, the performance gave us satisfaction; but we see no reason why *Percy* should be called *Peercy*.

The Musical Entertainment of *Sprigs of Laurel* afforded Messrs. Woodham and Cross an opportunity of displaying their vocal powers to the best advantage. Mrs. Seymour, with the usual exception (out of tune), was spirited and pleasing. On the whole, the after-piece merited much applause.

Wednesday Evening, Feb. 19.

THE EARL OF ESSEX,
AND THE FARMER.

The last effort of Mr. Fennell makes us regret excessively that he performs no more amongst us, this season. His

Earl of Essex, was indeed a fine performance. We have before noticed the flexibility of Mr. F's. voice; and, in the favourite of Elizabeth, he managed it to admiration. His action throughout, partook of the simple elegance of the soldier, and the polish of the courtier and lover. His parting scene with *Rutland* was extremely impressive, and the last interview with his wife was a master-piece of imitation.

The Farmer, was too much caricatured. The conversation-bonnet of Mrs. Woodham, and the pink bow and silk coat of Mr. Jefferson, were *outré*. Mr. Jefferson, made Jumps an Italian fop, and not a Cockney fop. The money-lending scene was all *art:* nature perhaps had concealed herself under the table; for we saw nothing of her. *Valentine* must indeed have been a simpleton, to suspect, for a moment, that such a grimacer as *Jumps* could possibly be X. Y. the money-lender. The song of "Bonny Bet" was evidently pitched too high for Mr. Woodham, who felt uncomfortable under it. Mr. Francis sung *the Ploughboy* as simply as we wished to hear it. Mrs. Woodham and Mrs. Seymour, on the whole, gave us much pleasure.

That acting which, from the appearance of a certain completeness, often satisfies an audience while it is yet far below perfection, is admirably characterised in the following epigram, which was written when Garrick and Barry were rival candidates for the histrionic wreath:

The town has found out different ways
  To praise its different LEARS;
To BARRY it gives loud huzzas,
  To GARRICK only tears.

"A king? ay ev'ry inch a king—"
  Such BARRY doth appear;
But GARRICK's quite another thing,
  He's ev'ry inch King LEAR.

Like a schoolboy that had lost his A B C.

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

MR. CENSOR,

I resume my task, but, I confess, with a heavy heart. P. is certainly setting. He appears in the last *Repository* at the fag end of the piece. S. is only a *Simpleton*. I will have nothing to do with him. P. for my money:

Un fou du moins fait rire et peut nous égayer.

Most earnestly do I join with Solomon Slender, when he exclaims, —"We hope, that our friend P will not be intimidated!"—What! intimidated at his *Hornbook?* For shame!

Mr. Censor, I am not given to flattery, and, though I have more than once suffered my sentiments of P to become a little visible, I have never loaded him with praise; but, there are moments, in the progress of human life, in which it becomes a friend, "albeit, unused to the melting mood," to rally, with a benevolent cheer, the dejected spirits of those about him. There are moments in which it is not less our duty than the source of the most exalted self-gratification to tell them how much we admire their talents, or love their virtues. In thus opening our sentiments to the prosperous, we may sometimes expose ourselves to the reproach of mere sunshine worship, or interested or mean adulation; we whisper them in the ear, or we feel abashed while we speak them: but, when it is to light up the countenance of misfortune that we utter them; when it is to re-inspire self-confidence in those who faint; when it is to fortify self-respect, sinking under the rebukes of a hard and misjudging world; when, in short, conscious of the generosity of our motives, we dare speak with a loud voice and bold and glistening eye, I know of nothing that "so becomes a man." Hear, then, in what accents I address myself to P:

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note,
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me,
On the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee.
—Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful!

Mr. Censor, we must leave no stone unturned to keep P. in the *Repository*. We must "do him courtesies."—"I'll speak in a monstrous little voice." He shall "lie *un*grammatically," since his twin-brother, GRUMBO, approves it. To sum up all, let him have pity upon me. If he refuse to appear in the *Repository*, I shall have nothing to write upon: "Othello's occupation's gone!"

There is one thing in my favour: if P "play Thisby," he cannot "hide his face." I "know him by the sound of his voice." No sooner does he make what H. would call his *début*, than all the man is manifest, and I begin clapping my hands. On the night of Mr. Fennell's benefit, he "was gratified in observing a *good house* attend the theatre." Mr. Warren's talents, "wants the soft insinuating address of a lover;" I am happy that Mr. W. is not charged with wanting it himself.

But, I am so far in arrears with P that I must say no more of his last week's labours; nor have I room for more than one extract from among his older beauties: "The talents of an elegant orthoepist were "judiciously displayed in pronouncing,

"——I will not fall alone,
"But OTHER groans shall tell my death."

Was I not in the right Mr Censor—at the least, does not P forcibly assist my argument,—when I set so high a value on the English tongue? Does not P show that it is praise enough to fill the ambition, not only of a private man, but of a great actor, just to have the talent of pronouncing its monosyllables? What a noble theme of praise! But, the truth of the matter is, that P no more intended to talk of that thing which is meant by the word orthoepy, than of the Man in the Moon.

Sir, I have an important observation to make, and it shall conclude this letter. I have never yet mentioned (though you have been polite enough to do it for me) that flower of our family, my elder and more worthy brother of New York. I assure you, sir, it would flatter me much, if, through the medium of your paper, he would condescend to manifest toward me a little fraternal attention. I should be happy to compare notes with him. I have, indeed, a project in my head, in which I calculate upon his good will. He discovers some of our constitutional feelings, but I perceive they have no scope. He makes a great fuss about an *amituere* who writes on things that are "*generly* understood." The heavens bless his simplicity! This it is not to have known Philadelphia! If the dear boy were here, he would have no time for such trifles! He knows nothing of P, and H, and Y, and Grumbo, and Moses; but, by your leave, i'faith, he shall! and, what is more, if they go on as they have done, I will turn them over to him. This is my project; and let them look to it.

HORNBOOK.

ANOTHER PERPLEXING STORY!

We have received a very polite note from I-SPY-I, our very obliging correspondent, in which he loads us with thanks for the insertion of his notice concerning the REPOSITORY. We beg him to be assured that we hold the obligation to be, at the least, reciprocal. The correctness of his information has shed a lustre upon our journal; and, as to any little civility conferred upon himself, the subscribers to the REPOSITORY, or the proprietors, or attendant *literati* of that work, it is our amiable weakness to overflow with dispositions for performing such services, with which we are then best pleased when they are most beneficial.

This duty discharged, we turn with undivided attention to our readers. Monday evening being arrived, and the REPOSITORY, after much fatigue, and with a very moderate allowance of blunders, being put to press, the *literati* adjourned to a private room, where they rallied their spirits sufficiently to enable them to fix on Tuesday evening for the meeting of the club. This was hard duty; but Wednesday was the play-night. On Tuesday evening, then, the chair was taken, and a motion made, "that the eighteenth draught of the Ode be now read and agreed to." This "called up" P:

What angel wakes me from my flow'ry bed?

P. however, sat down again, and suffered the reading to proceed: he then moved, "that it be re-committed." This, was seconded by Solomon Slender, Esq. and, with some difficulty, carried. Solomon Slender was by this time a little heated; but, no one yet suspected that he was about to surpass Achilles in his wrath. The wrath of Achilles, indeed, delayed the fall of Troy; but, the wrath of Solomon Slender, Esq. as his enemies bellow, and his friends confess, will go nigh to delay the fall of the *Theatrical Censor*. The truth is, that the Ode had arrived at that pitch of perfection;—it had in it so much of the

Words that breathe and thoughts that burn;—

that, it was confidently whispered, in the club-room, it would produce effects by the history of which the hitherto-celebrated performances of Orpheus and Amphion would be thrown into oblivion. It is melancholy to relate the rest. Before he proceed, the reader is requested to take into consideration the impetuous nature of the passions, and—

Man's weak, hapless state.

The controversy was renewed about the line which, we believe, we have sufficiently set before our readers, in our late number. Suffice it to say, that Solomon Slender, unable to carry his point against Grumbo, Moses, and many others, suddenly exclaimed:—

What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here!

and, in an instant, the Ode, the notes, the readings, new and old, were irrevocably cast amid the blaze of a large wood fire. We must not swell our pages with an account of the scuffling, scrambling, or small-talk, that ensued. Part of the MS. was saved; but, what a part!—the reader will be in wrath too, when he sees it. We have only to thank our stars, that we have nothing in our conduct for which there needs apology. It has been profoundly observed, that—

Princes and peasants must submit to fate.

ODE.

Since fate, or all the Muses,
Whichever that you chuses,
Decreed that we should meet
In defence of faulty actors,
And to write down all detractors,
I think our *corpse* complete:
For here is Master Greasy,
And his neighbour, little Sneasy,
And H, and Y, and P,
And Grumbo, too, I see.

* * * * * * * *

Before we make an end, Sir,
Let's curse the cursed *Censor!*

* * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * *

"O most lame and impotent conclusion!" Never before did an affair end so completely *in fumo*.

TO READERS AND CORRESPONDENTS.

An answer to the observations and quere of a writer in the Port Folio was prepared for this week; but Master Hornbook's lucrubrations have run out to a greater length than we expected, and prevented its insertion, till our next.

To Clarus, who has given us such positive assurances of a certain actor having taken a principal part in the *elegant* critiques relating to the Theatrical Censor, we can only say, that we are sorry this sprout of the buskin should be suffered to *murder* the English language, off as well as on the stage.

The price of this work is 50 cents for four numbers. To be had at No. 42, Walnut-street, and at Mr. Phillips's Circulating Library, south Fourth-street. Communications, and orders from the country, received at the former place.